

JESUS: COMMUNAL HEALER

Open



As South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela dismantled apartheid and brought healing to the divided nation. He wrote in his autobiography, "I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison, that was my mission: to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both."¹

– Nelson Mandela; [Wikimedia Commons](#); Public Domain

- Do you agree that *the oppressed* and *the oppressor* both need freedom? Why or why not?

Context

Historians estimate that 80 to 90% of the Roman Empire's populace worked as tenants or landless day laborers, at or below subsistence level, on large feudal estates during the first century. Like other Roman provinces, Israel's economic systems kept people experiencing poverty in bondage.

Read Luke 18:35-43; 19:1-10 (NIV)

^{18:35} As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

³⁸ He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came

near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied.

⁴² Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." ⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. ...

^{19:1} Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he told him about Jesus short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Discuss

1. In the Middle East, village people honor important guests by walking out of town to greet and escort them into their village. As the people escort Jesus, he orders those insulting the beggar to bring him into his presence.
How do you think those greeting Jesus felt? How would you feel if you were one of those greeting Jesus?
2. In Jericho, Jesus meets Zacchaeus, an overseer of tax collectors (19:2). What facts do we find about Zacchaeus from 19:1-4?
3. Typically, the community selects a host who could provide a high level of hospitality for a distinguished visitor. However, Jesus selects Zacchaeus as his host.

Why do you think the people become so angry (19:7)? How might you have responded?

¹ Nelson Mandela. Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela, Back Bay Books, October 1995, 624.

4. After Jesus gives sight to the blind man, the people join him in praising God (18:43). In contrast, when Jesus accepts their oppressor, the crowd complains bitterly (19:7).
5. Describe the connection between Jesus' engagement with Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus' commitment to the community he harmed (19:8).

Reflect

By extending costly grace, Jesus liberates Zacchaeus from self-interest, greed, and fear, freeing him to live in restored relationships with God and his neighbors. Indirectly, Jesus also helps free Jericho's community from economic oppression. Zacchaeus' offer of gifts to the poor and restoring what he took shows his willingness to make amends (Lk. 19:8).

- As recipients of Jesus' love, mercy, and grace, how can we serve the oppressed and the oppressor in ways that promote shalom (true peace)? Should love and acceptance be extended towards oppressors as Jesus did with Zacchaeus?

Pray

Sit in silence and allow God to speak to you. Let the Holy Spirit search your heart and point you toward Jesus and his purposes and mission.